

Senate Bill 17
February 20, 2007
Presented by Larry Peterman
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Larry Peterman, Chief of Field Operations for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

SB 17 will modify the Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program (UGBEP) by eliminating the percentage of funding required to be set aside and spent for upland game bird releases. The Private Land/Public Wildlife Council studied this issue and adopted a recommendation that led to this legislation.

Currently, statute requires FWP to set aside 15% of Upland Game Bird Enhancement Fund revenues for game bird releases, and requires 25% of these funds be spent each year. FWP believes eliminating these required set-asides would provide the Department more flexibility in administering the pheasant release program and therefore supports SB 17.

Passage of SB 17 will not change the amount of funding that is dedicated to upland game bird enhancement – it will only eliminate the requirement that a certain amount of the revenue be spent specifically on pheasant releases. Passage of SB 17 will not affect the administrative rules that outline how persons interested in the pheasant release program apply for, or receive funding.

FWP believes that eliminating the set-aside requirement will enable the Department to administer the overall Upland Game Bird Enhancement program more effectively while fully meeting the intent of the program. The Department intends to make a number of updates and improvements to the UGBEP during the upcoming biennium. Passage of this bill would facilitate that effort and would allow the Department to adjust pheasant release activities without the concern of mandatory expenditures, especially during years of high pheasant abundance.